CLAIMS

1. A heat fusible conjugate fiber produced by high-speed melt spinning, which comprises a first resin component having an orientation index of 40% or higher and a second resin component having a lower melting or softening point than the melting point of the first resin component and an orientation index of 25% or lower, the second resin component being present on at least part of the surface of the fiber in a lengthwise continuous configuration.

2. The heat fusible conjugate fiber according to claim 1, having a heat shrinkage of 5% or less at a temperature higher than the melting point or softening point of the second resin component by 10°C.

3. The heat fusible conjugate fiber according to claim 1 or 2, which is produced by a process including, after the spinning, a heat treatment or a crimp treatment but no drawing.

4. The heat fusible conjugate fiber according to any one of claims 1 to 3, having a sheath-core configuration in which the first resin component makes the core, and the second resin component makes the sheath.

5. The heat fusible conjugate fiber according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the first resin component comprises polypropylene, and the second resin component comprises high-density polyethylene.

6. A nonwoven fabric produced by providing a carded web comprising the heat fusible conjugate fiber according to claim 1 and heat fusing the intersections of the fibers constituting the web.

7. A bulky nonwoven fabric comprising heat fusible conjugate fibers comprising two components having different melting points, formed by heat fusing the intersections of the fibers, and having a specific volume of 95 cm^3/g or more, a strength per basis weight of 0.18 (N/25 mm)/(g/m^2) or higher, and a bulk softness per unit thickness of

0.14 N/mm or less.

8. The bulky nonwoven fabric according to claim 7, which is produced by providing a carded web and heat fusing the intersections of the fibers in the web by blowing hot air.

9. The bulky nonwoven fabric according to claim 7 or 8, wherein the heat fusible conjugate fiber is the heat fusible conjugate fiber according to claim 1.